



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## SOME INTERNATIONAL DELUSIONS.

BY THE REV. FRANCIS E. CLARK, D.D., PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED  
SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

---

IN a peculiarly leisurely fashion the steamers of the *Messageries Maritimes* go circling around the Mediterranean coast from Alexandria to Constantinople, forming numberless little loops as they stop by day to discharge their cargo at some insignificant port, and then sail on when evening comes to the next place of call.

Among my fellow-passengers recently on one of these good but very slow ships, the "Irrawadie," was a little curly-haired English boy, who had evidently been brought up in the strictest sect of the aristocracy—an embryonic Englishman of the Englishmen.

"Do you speak French, little boy?" said a good lady to him, who was trying to scrape acquaintance with the youthful Briton.

"Oh, naow," said the little chap.

"Do you speak American," then asked the lady.

"Oh, naow," he replied with a still stronger emphasis.

"But wouldn't you like to learn American?" persisted the lady.

"Oh, naow, thanks," answered this sturdy little patriot. "It is very, very nahsty to speak American."

The verdict of this terrible infant is the one that would, very likely, be given by many Englishmen and English women of a larger growth. It is taken for granted by a great number of otherwise most intelligent and respectable citizens of the mother country, without any special investigation of what it is to "speak American" or "act American," that it is a "very, very nahsty thing" to do. And it is only fair to say that there is a large class

of Anglophobists on this side of the briny Atlantic who have just as little conception of what it is to speak or act like a cultivated Englishman, and who from the same insufficient data regard it as exceedingly "nahsty," or, as the feminine American adjective would have it, "very horrid."

Little matters of accent and pronunciation too often obscure real kinship and account for many of the lesser delusions.

When in Australia recently I was reminded more than once that my own vernacular bore a remarkable resemblance to the common manner of speech in the English colonies, and I was frequently complimented with the rather faint praise that my audience would "scarcely know that I was an American."

Evidently some of my auditors expected to hear a mixture of the Ojibway, Cherokee, and Micmac dialects, and were scarcely prepared for even a superficial acquaintance with Johnson and Addison.

At the same time my national pride is humbled by remembering that since returning to America I have been asked more than once: "What language do the people of Australia speak?" "Are they all black fellows, or are there some white men among them?"

Even in England, incredible as it may seem, I have had such questions put to me concerning the people of this greatest appanage of the British crown.

While attending a meeting in an English city, a Yorkshireman with a very broad accent, who remarked that he had "coomed all the way from Southern Yorkshire to attend this meeting," made fun of a young American girl from Philadelphia, who remarked that she was "vary glad to be among her English friends." It seemed excruciatingly funny to him that she should say "vāry," but there was nothing remarkable in his estimation in the fact that he himself had "coomed" from Yorkshire.

A speaker who followed me at a social gathering in Sydney, New South Wales, remarked by way of good-natured badinage that he should know that I was an American from the way in which I pronounced the word "America." "All you Americans," he went on to say, generalizing very largely, as such speakers are apt to do, "call it 'Murica,' while we Australians speak of the great continent which Columbus discovered as America." The temptation was too great to resist, so, when my turn

came again at this same unconventional gathering, I remarked that, if I was known by my pronunciation of the name of my native country, I should also suspect, wherever I might hear my Sydney friend make an address, that he belonged to the great Island Continent which lies under the Southern Cross ; for while we Americans follow Webster and Worcester and Johnson and every other lexicographer in saying "Australia," he put in several additional letters which were not absolutely necessary and called it "Aoustrailia," and that I had noticed that many of my friends in that magnificent capital of the Southern Seas out-English the English themselves in their Cockney pronunciation, since I was frequently asked when I came down to the breakfast table: "How I found myself to-dye, and whether I would like to see the morning paiper?"

In fact, after returning to my native heath from the mother country or any of her colonies, I always feel like remarking, with a famous temperance lecturer who has recently returned from England, that "I have come back with my American accent undenasalized."

But there are other popular delusions which are more vexatious than those which relate to speech or accent. The idea prevails, I have found, very generally in the Old World that all American young people are bold and forward and brassy ; that if there is a modest one among them all he is a strange exception, a genuine *lusus naturæ*.

I was gravely informed by a good friend in Australia who thought he knew all about it that he understood that all American girls on the street and in the cars, as well as at home, were constantly chewing gum and expectorating vigorously in every direction.

When I diffidently informed him that I was acquainted with a good many American girls, and that I had yet to see the first one who answered his description of a genuine American damsel, he seemed to think, though he was too polite to say so directly, that I had scarcely kept my eyes open [in my own land, or else that I had been blinded by prejudice.

The climate of America also comes in for many maledictions from our friends on the other side of the ocean. In this respect we probably have the worst reputation of any nation on the face of the earth, especially among our forebears in the mother coun-

try. I have no doubt that the dread of the "awfully hot weather," which the English expect to experience in America, deters hundreds, if not thousands, every year from taking the trip across the Atlantic.

At the same time, it must be said in all fairness that our popular conception of English weather, as a dreary mixture of raw winds, penetrating fogs and ceaseless pattering raindrops, is scarcely nearer the truth than the Englishman's opinion of the temperature of America.

"Do you really think that we shall be able to stand your weather without very serious consequences to our health?" was the almost pathetic question of a stout Englishman to me as we neared New York on my last return to America. He looked vigorous enough to shovel coal all day long in a stokehole, or to be an attendant in a Turkish bath, without suffering any serious consequences, but he evidently was in a state of great mental perturbation concerning the awful summer of which he had read and heard so much.

Another cause for alarm among our trans-Atlantic cousins is the dreadful Jersey mosquito. He has been exaggerated by the fears of our friends out of all proportion to fact; and the old threadbare joke, which has such a woodsy flavor of last year's chestnuts about it, to the effect "that the mosquitoes in this country are so large that many of them would weigh a pound, and that they sit on the trees and bark as the people go by," is evidently accepted by many across the seas with only a few grains of salt. "Be sure that you put your petticoat over your head," an Englishman in the steerage said to a female passenger on the voyage to which I have alluded, "when you go ashore at Jersey City, for they do say that the mosquitoes are something terrible, and that they do bite awful."

How much of this ungrammatical warning was humorous and how much serious it was difficult to determine, but it was evidently, in the mind of the one who gave it, "founded on fact," as the short story writers would say.

Many of these extraordinary popular delusions are directly traceable to ignorance and lack of the commonest information concerning America and Americans.

When dining with an Australian friend not many months since I was informed that he had seen in his morning paper a

statement to the effect that there had been a great fire in America. "What city is burned up now?" we said to him, in some alarm. "I can't remember just the place," he replied, "but I think it was Idaho." Our fears were somewhat relieved, for we felt that there might be a considerable fire somewhere among the tens of thousands of square miles of that vast territory without greatly endangering the welfare of the American Republic.

When we get into some of the Eastern countries, of course we find ignorance far more dense and crass than among those who speak our common mother tongue. In Turkey, for instance, one of our missionaries was recently asked in all seriousness whether "America was on a hill or in a valley?" Such hopeless density it is scarcely worth while to attempt to enlighten.

But while we smile at the lack of information exhibited by our cousins across the seas concerning matters that are as familiar as A B C to us, it is not at all improbable that some of us live in a vitreous tenement ourselves. How many bright American youth, who are fresh from their geographies, could name the different counties of England; or could tell whether Leeds and Birmingham were in York or Lincolnshire, Herts, or Kent? Yet very likely these same youth would laugh long and loud if an English cousin should locate Boston in Missouri, or St. Louis in Texas.

When we reach the Antipodes many Americans carry a still more startling and varied stock of misinformation. How many realize that it is a five days' journey across the channel that separates New Zealand from Australia, the two great islands of the Australasian Empire? How many know much about the political situation of Victoria and New South Wales, of Queensland and South Australia? How many can locate the Banda Sea or the Sulu Sea, or tell where the placid waters of the Celebes Sea bask under the torrid rays of the equator? How many realize that it is a railway journey of two thousand miles between Adelaide and Brisbane, and that this little strip of coast constitutes largely the inhabited portion of the Island Continent?

The chief source of these popular delusions is the daily newspapers, on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific, which cater for the sensational public, who are not content without their horrid list of murders and divorces and railway accidents daily; who

would feel defrauded, as if they had invested two cents in vain, if they did not find in the *Daily Stabber* and the *Morning Sewer* the account of some blood-curdling crime or fearful accident.

Even the most respectable papers seem to find room in their foreign columns chiefly for startling crimes or awful accidents. If a fire-damp chokes a hundred men, if in a railroad accident fifty people "rush into eternity," if a dreadful murder shocks the moral sentiments of five continents, these matters are presented to the public with the abundant emphasis of scare-heads and leaded columns. But the great movements in the political, religious, social, and scientific worlds very slowly find their way into the papers of other lands.

Picking up a London paper once when in England (it was no other than "The Thunderer" itself), the only paragraph of American news which I could find in any part of the voluminous blanket was a statement to the effect that a man had been arrested in Boston for kissing his wife upon the street. Of course, as might be expected, this was a newspaper "fake" which some humorous reporter, for the lack of anything better, had inserted in some American paper. But this was the only piece of news which it had been thought worth while that day to cable under the seas to this great metropolitan journal.

Many an English and Australian friend has said to me: "I should think you would be afraid to travel in America; you always seem to be having such dreadful railway accidents. We scarcely take up a paper without seeing an account of some new horror." Alas, that it cannot be said that the frequency of railroad horrors is a popular delusion, but the fears of my friend were largely exaggerated, because the papers he saw gave him very little else than these accounts of direful railway accidents and other disasters. When I informed him that I had travelled many tens of thousands of miles without meeting a serious mishap or ever being held up by highwaymen, it almost passed his comprehension, and he made up his mind that either the papers which he habitually read or myself had been drawing a long bow.

One of these same friends who entertained these fears, I regret to say, being somewhat soothed by my favorable account of railway travel in the United States, ventured across the Atlantic and

even visited the World's Fair in Chicago. Alas for his temerity ! For in the very heart of this land of the free his train was stopped by "road agents," its express car was rifled of its contents and the robbers got off with their booty scot free. What realistic accounts he must have carried home, and how he will corroborate every account of robbery and disaster which he sees in the London papers !

Even such a well-informed paper as *Galighani's Messenger* often contains practical slanders of American public life : not because the individual incidents recorded are not true for the most part, but because they are out of all proportion to other matters of news. The little crime is exaggerated and the great virtue is relegated to an obscure corner, and to small type at that. Last summer that paper contained the announcement that the sentiment against lynching for minor crimes was "beginning to make itself felt to some extent" in America. When one remembers how these horrid outrages are denounced and loathed by the respectable people of America, North and South alike, it makes one's blood hot to read such cold-blooded misrepresentations.

But again it must be confessed that these popular delusions are due quite as much to our own exceedingly sensational newspapers as to anything that is printed in the lands across the seas. The headlines of our average daily, whenever they are read by the people of other lands, would be regarded as proof positive of the worst that can be said concerning the awful state of social life in America. To peruse these papers for a single week would naturally convince any foreigner that America was largely inhabited by thugs and murderers and divorced women and railroad wreckers, while the few who could not be classed in these categories would stand in imminent danger of their lives from some social upheaval or war of the natural elements. The craving for sensations on the part of many of our penny dreadfuls, miscalled newspapers, accounts very largely for these extraordinary and most unpleasant popular delusions concerning America and Americans.

On this side of the Atlantic too, as I before intimated, we are by no means free from our delusions concerning our friends across the waters. We have the general impression that the "Britisher" is a rude and pompous and overbearing man, carrying out in every inch of his stalwart frame the caricature



with which we are so familiar when he is contrasted with tall and lanky Brother Jonathan in our comic newspapers.

The typical John Bull in the eyes of many Americans is this rough and unpleasant creature, whose very name suggests that it is exceedingly dangerous for us to have him in the china-shop of our American feelings and peculiarities. And yet there is probably no part of the world where there is more genuine politeness, or more of that sincere heartiness of character from which all genuine politeness must spring, than in that same Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

That which passes for rudeness in the eyes of the over-sensitive American is often a species of plain-spoken sincerity, combined with a perfectly unconscious assumption that nothing can be quite so good as that which is marked with the British label. In fact, so completely has the Englishman taken this for granted, so entirely beyond all dispute does he regard it, that the most unpleasant characteristic of English life springs from this source. "You speak quite like an Englishman and not like an American at all," was a frequent compliment which I have received, and which I accepted usually with as good grace as possible, though I sometimes made bold to reply: "I speak quite like an American, my good friend, and I should regard it as a good deal more of a compliment if you put it in that way." But this form of kindly commendation which frequently grated on my nerves was simply due to the fact that nothing was considered quite the acme of praise which did not compare the object complimented with the English standard.

I have heard in America very much about British stolidity and undemonstrativeness. This, too, is a very extraordinary popular delusion, for if there is a demonstrative and exuberant people on the face of the earth it is these British brethren of ours. In their public meetings and conventions, whether religious or secular, the speaker is never in doubt concerning their attitude toward him or the questions which he is discussing. Their encouraging "Hear, hear!" ("Yere, yere!" you must call it, if you would be thoroughly *au fait*), their ironical "Oh, oh!" their hearty applause, and the occasional hiss if the sentiments of the speaker do not accord with their views, make it a far more lively and interesting performance to speak to an English audience than to address an assemblage of Yankees,

who always seem to feel that it is a solemn and serious occasion, no matter what the subject of the discourse may be. In Yankee-land the speaker's poor jokes and witticisms and strenuous efforts at pathos or impressiveness are alike unreflected from the impassive countenances of the audience.

The most serious count against these popular misapprehensions is that, while insignificant in themselves, they are really important in preventing the advent of the era of good feeling for which every lover of his fellow men should hope and pray. It is a crying shame that the descendants of the Normans and Saxons and Danes, who have gone out into all the world to found new empires and to people new continents, should know so little of each other, and should often be so wrapped up in their insular or continental prejudices as to hug these popular delusions to their hearts as treasured traditions.

If the peoples of England, America, and Australia knew more of each other, they would love each other far more. International misunderstandings of any serious character would be almost impossible, and war between the peoples who speak the language of Shakespeare would be an undreamed of possibility. English arrogance and American spread-eagleism and Australian provincialism would each receive a deadly blow, if the great branches of the English race but knew each other better, and these extraordinary international delusions would take to themselves wings and fly away.

FRANCIS E. CLARK.